

Foster Carers

Allegations Management Procedure Information

INTRODUCTION

All organisations should have a managing allegations procedure. This covers any situation in which anyone who works with a child; either in a paid or voluntary capacity, is alleged to have harmed a child.

For local authority foster carers, registered with the Somerset Foster Care Service, this leaflet summarises the foster care procedures which details how allegations against you are dealt with.

The procedure is initiated when concerns are raised about you that indicates that you have allegedly behaved inappropriately **AND** one or more of the following is considered to have occurred;

- The individual has behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed your child, or
- They have possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to your child, or
- They have behaved towards your child in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children
- Behaved or may have behaved in a way that indicates they may not be suitable to work with children.

NB this is referred to as the 'criteria*'

INITIAL ACTION

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If you have not already been made aware of the allegation, your supervising social worker will inform you.

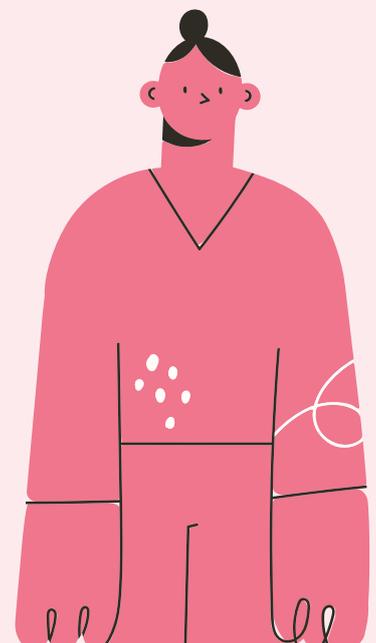
The Foster Care Service will contact the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), all local authorities in England and Wales have a LADO.

The LADO is responsible for advising the Foster Care Service on the processes that may be triggered when one or more of the criteria* are met.

The fact that you have been provided with this leaflet indicates that the Foster Care Service considers that the allegation meets one or more of the criteria*.

The LADO may consult with the following agencies if deemed necessary:

- Children's Social Care - to identify any welfare issues and support for the child in placement.
- Police - to consider if a crime has been committed.



ASSESSMENT OF THE ALLEGATION

B

The Foster Care Service will inform the LADO by completing an Allegations Reporting Form (ARF).

The LADO will evaluate the information within the form and agree if the criteria are met. If the criteria are considered **NOT** to be met, this does not mean that the matter is concluded but may be considered a conduct or practice issue, with relevant processes being followed.

If any of the criteria are met, then the remainder of this leaflet will provide an overview of the possible processes that are followed.

PROCESS

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Depending on the nature of the allegation, one or more of the following processes take place:

- Inquiries and assessment by Children's Social Care about any of the children involved to determine the need to protect or provide services.
- A Police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
- An investigation under the foster care procedures.

Depending on the nature of the allegation and whether the involvement of Children's Social Care / Police is required, consideration will be given to removing the child/ren from your care. Other alternative options may include providing respite care for the child/ren in your care during any process being followed.

At this stage, the priority of professionals is to ensure the safety of the child, including your own children.

An initial visit will be undertaken to speak to the child in placement to inform this decision.

Timescales will vary according to the type of process e.g. a criminal investigation by its nature will take longer to conclude than an investigation (under the foster care procedure).

The LADO will ensure that any investigations undertaken are monitored and any delays addressed.

INVESTIGATION UNDER THE FOSTER CARE PROCEDURES

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All allegations need to be treated seriously but many will not require the involvement of Children's Social Care and / or the Police.

Where a decision is taken to investigate an allegation under the foster care procedures, the following provides a broad summary of the actions:

- You will receive a letter confirming that an investigation is required; the terms of reference; the name of the person undertaking the investigation; contact details of support services available to you e.g. FosterTalk
- A copy of the foster care procedure will be provided.
- Confirmation of the timescales (normally 20 working days) for you to receive a copy of the report with the right to have factual inaccuracies corrected.
- Confirmation that no children will be placed with you during the investigation.

COMMUNICATION

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The relevant agencies, including the Foster Care Service, will keep you informed and updated.

Your supervising social worker or named contact is responsible for keeping you informed about the progress of any investigation under the foster care procedures.

You will also be informed of the outcome of the investigation.



CONCLUSION

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Upon conclusion of an investigation, one of the following DfE defined outcomes will be agreed:

- **Substantiated** - there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation.
- **Malicious** - there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive.
- **False** - there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation.
- **Unsubstantiated** - there is insufficient evidence to prove or disprove allegation. The term therefore does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded** - there is no evidence or proper basis which support the allegation(s) being made.

You will be provided with a copy of the final report.

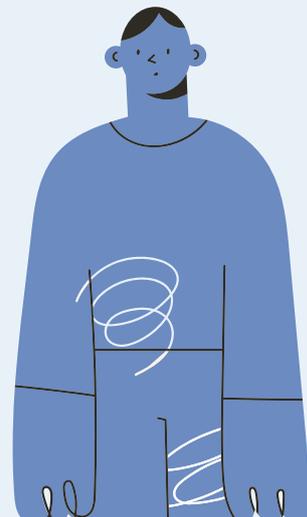
You will be required to attend a review meeting with your supervising social worker.

A copy of the investigation and review reports will be presented to the foster care panel.

KEY POINTS

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- The foster care service will notify and take advice from the LADO if any of the criteria* are met.
- If the criteria* are not met, the allegation will still be treated seriously and dealt with through other means.
- If any of the criteria* are met, one or more of the processes to investigate the matter will be followed.
- You should be informed of any relevant developments by the responsible agencies - if involved, and by the foster care service including being informed of the outcome.



SOUTH WEST CHILD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

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The managing allegations procedure used by any organisation within Somerset should reflect the South West Child Protection Procedures (SWCPP).

The local authority foster care procedures are consistent with the SWCPP.

USEFUL CONTACTS

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Initial concerns can be directed to the relevant organisation, and agencies that may be involved:

- **Relevant Supervising Social Worker / Team Manager**

- **FosterTalk:** 01527 836910

<https://fostertalk.org/>

- **Care First (Counselling Service):** 0800 174319

www.carefirst-lifestyle.co.uk

- **LADO:** 0300 123 2224

somersetlado@somerset.gov.uk

FURTHER INFORMATION

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For more detailed information about the process see:

